Name of Speaker: Jared Mason

Title of Lecture: The Tools and Processes of Business Intelligence

Date of Lecture: November 7th, 2013

Introduction

The speaker, Jared Mason, came to present on the process of business intelligence from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. He started working for BYU part time while he was going to school there to become a computer programmer. He started out looking to work in a technical field, but then learned that he like working with people, and thus became interested in business intelligence.

Summary

The speaker began by introducing the concept of business intelligence. He defined it as, taking data and making it useful. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints has over 15 million members, over 300 meeting houses, over 140 temples worldwide. They also support 177 languages. This creates massive amounts of data, and those in charge of these segments of the churches organizations need the data to make intelligent decisions.

He then spoke about the concept of enterprise information management. This management was broken down into a system that consists of five steps. The first step is to set up the database or application, the second to capture the data. Third is to organize that data, then to report on it and finally maintain the process.

The first step of setting up the data requires more than just a database or place to hold the data. It is important to not follow “The Field of Dreams” philosophy. In other words, just because you built it, doesn’t mean that it will get used. It is important to design the application or data input with the end in mind, and one too that helps get all the data needed for the gathering of the data is a bus matrix.

The second step is to actually collect the data from the application. In some cases they use either a Ralph Kindle methodology or a STAR schema. These are built to capture the data and make it so that it can be used at a later time.

The third step of organizing the data really means to extract the data from the capture point. Then the data gets transformed into what it form it needs for the warehouse. Then the final part of step three is to load it into the data warehouse.

Step four is to then report on the data, this is also known as the semantic layer. This is where the customer will pull the reports but does not need to know all of the details of SQL or how the code looks. This all then needs to be maintained.

Reflection

The speaker, Jarod Mason, was well organized and gave a great presentation about how The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints helps each of its various departments manage the data that they need. He gave great insights into how data can be managed to provide opportunities to make business decisions.

One of the examples that he gave was how data management could be used to help manage the church buildings. He gave a scenario where the data could calculate the cost and savings of having a program which would switch off the lights of the chapel at a given time each night. This information can be used to save money each time that the program is used and could also help to determine if the program is effective or not.

From this lecture I also liked the reminder that often times we have to keep in mind what the purpose of our programs are. In other words, he spoke about how he was able to help his customers by keeping what they needed in mind. He spoke about some opportunities using a bus matrix.

I thought the concept of the bus matrix helped to show how a programmer can get the data that they needed as well as be able to solve the problems that the customer. These concepts will help me be a better programmer because it is good to be reminded that programming is about what the customer wants, not what the programmer wants.

Conclusion

In conclusion the speaker was very well prepared, and gave great insights on how to help manage data, so that it can be used to make powerful business solutions.